

MACAULAY'S USE OF AUTHORITIES

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tance. There is the autobiography of Major John Bernardi, who was imprisoned for his share in the Assassination Plot of 1696. Macaulay pronounces it 'not at all to be trusted. It contains some absurd mistakes, and some deliberate falsehoods/¹ There is the Duchess of Marlborough's vindication of herself, which contains an account of her relations to Anne both before and after her accession, and much about the Duke's relations to William and Anne. This narrative, says Macaulay, 'is to be read with constant suspicion, except when, as is often the case, she relates some instance of her own malignity and insolence/ The Duchess, he asserts in another note, 'was so abandoned a liar that it is impossible to believe a word that she says, except when she accuses herself/ On the next page, he speaks of 'that habitual inaccuracy, which, even when she has no motive for lying, makes it necessary to read every word written or dictated by her with suspicion/ And finally ' she was indeed lamentably deficient in memory, a faculty which is proverbially said to be necessary to persons of the class to which she belonged/ ² Evidently Macaulay had a certain animus against this witness: he does not sum up the value of her evidence like a judge, but like the counsel for the prosecution. It is rather like

Serjeant Buzfuz on the witnesses for that
monster Mr.
Pickwick.

Take now two more authorities. One of
Macaulay's
chief authorities was naturally Burnetts
History of My
Own Time. In chapter vii Macaulay gives a
long character
ter of Burnet, pointing out his defects with
great frank-
ness, and by no means exaggerating his
merits. In a foot-
note he discusses the question of Burnet's
veracity, saying

¹ V, 2590 (xxi).

² V, 2127 (xviii) ; IV, 1819 (xv) ; V, 2126.